United Nations A/59/268

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 August 2004

Original: English

Fifty-ninth session
Item 48 of the provisional agenda*

Sport for peace and development: International Year of Sport and Physical Education

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/5 on 3 November 2003, in which the Assembly proclaimed the year 2005 the International Year of Sport and Physical Education. Guidance and support for activities in connection with the year will come from the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, which has been requested by the Secretary-General to handle sport-related issues in cooperation with the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace.

The present report describes current and planned activities, initiatives and networking at the international, national and local levels and provides examples of the potential of sport-related projects and programmes for the promotion of health, education, development and peace. It also provides examples of partnership initiatives among governmental organizations, as well as with vibrant civil society organizations with a sport focus.

The report also describes the implementation of other points of resolution 58/5, including the status of the process of drafting an international convention against doping in sport under the aegis of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

* A/59/150.

04-46129 (E) 030904

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 58/5 of 3 November 2003, the General Assembly encouraged Governments, international sports bodies and sport-related organizations to elaborate and implement partnership initiatives and development projects compatible with the education provided at all levels of schooling to help achieve the goals contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration;[1] encouraged the United Nations to develop strategic partnerships with the range of stakeholders involved in sport, including sports organizations, sports associations and the private sector, to assist in the implementation of sport for development programmes; stressed the need for all parties to cooperate closely with international sports bodies to elaborate a "code of good practice"; invited Governments to accelerate the elaboration of an international anti-doping convention in all sports activities; and proclaimed 2005 the International Year of Sport and Physical Education.

2. Pursuant to resolution 58/5, the Secretary-General urged Governments to give serious consideration to how sport could be more systematically included in plans to improve people's lives, especially those of children living in poverty, disease or conflict.

3. A small office to assist with the preparation for the International Year was established in Geneva in April 2004 under the leadership of Adolf Ogi, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace. The office is working closely with the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships in New York, which is providing guidance and support for the Year, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). As lead agency for the Year, UNESCO is helping to focus advocacy and awareness-raising on strengthening physical education and sport in education systems globally in compliance with its International Charter of Physical Education and Sport of UNESCO.[2] As activities for the Year get under way, additional support is expected from the United Nations Development Programme and the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat.

II. Background

4. In October 2003, the Secretary-General published the report of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, entitled *Sport for Development and Peace: Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*. In many aspects the report constituted the basis for General Assembly resolution 58/5 and represents a synthesis of the long-standing relationship between the world of sport and the United Nations system.

5. Sport was first formally included in activities of the United Nations system at the first international conference of ministers in charge of sport and physical education, organized by UNESCO in Paris in 1976. This led to the establishment of an Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport, as well as to the adoption of the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport in 1978.

6. Since that time many entities of the United Nations system have engaged in a relationship with sports organizations, such as the International Olympic Committee and other members of the Olympic Movement, sports federations, sport clubs and sport-related non-governmental organizations. In 2001, the Secretary-General

nominated Adolf Ogi, former President of the Swiss Confederation, to serve as his Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace. The objective of the post is twofold: (a) to make the practice of sport more systematic; and (b) to motivate sports organizations to become more interested and involved in United Nations activities through partnerships.

7. The 2003 report recognized that sport presents a natural partnership for the Organization. By its very nature sport is about participation, inclusion and citizenship. It brings individuals and communities together, highlighting commonalities and bridging cultural and ethnic divides. Sport provides a forum to learn skills such as discipline, confidence and leadership and it teaches core principles such as tolerance, cooperation and respect. Sport teaches the value of effort and how to manage victory, as well as defeat.

8. When the positive aspects of sport are emphasized, sport becomes a powerful vehicle through which the United Nations can work towards achieving its goals. The practice of sport is vital to the holistic development of young people, fostering their physical and emotional health and building valuable social connections. It offers opportunities for play and self-expression, beneficial especially for those young people with few other opportunities in their lives. Sport also provides healthy alternatives to harmful actions, such as drug abuse and crime. Within schools, physical education is an essential component of quality education. Physical education programmes promote physical activity and studies have shown that such programmes can improve academic performance.

9. In its 2003 report, the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace found that well-designed, sport-based initiatives were practical and cost-effective tools to achieve objectives in development and peace. Sport can cut across barriers that divide societies, making it a powerful tool to support conflict prevention and peace-building efforts, both symbolically at the global level and practically within communities. When applied effectively, sport programmes promote social integration and foster tolerance, helping to reduce tension and generate dialogue. The convening power of sport makes it additionally compelling as a tool for advocacy and communication.

10. The objectives of the United Nations system for the International Year of Sport and Physical Education in 2005 can be summarized as follows:

(a) To broaden the general perception of "sport" beyond "elite sport" to include the notion of "sport for all";

(b) To underline the need for physical education as part of a balanced education and leading towards the achievement of Education for All in education systems in particular, as advocated by the World Education Forum, held in Dakar from 26 to 28 April 2000;[3]

(c) To create interest in human development issues in the world of sport (the sports industry, sport federations, athletes and the sports media) and to facilitate partnerships;

(d) To encourage initiatives where sport can assist in creating a platform for intercultural, post-conflict, peace-building dialogue;

(e) To disseminate information about the value of sport and physical education for development and peace in order to integrate sport into development strategies, programmes and activities.

III. Institutional arrangements

11. As the lead agency for sport-related activities within the United Nations, UNESCO has a key role to play in convincing Governments to advance the cause of sport and to improve awareness of the benefits of sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace. In that regard, a recent letter sent by the Director-General of UNESCO to Member States aims to draw national Governments and physical education stakeholders to mobilize efforts for a successful International Year in 2005. The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, as co-chair of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, has collected a wide range of examples of the implementation of sport-based projects for development and peace by the United Nations system, as well as by non-governmental organizations and other partners.

12. Under the joint leadership of the Director-General of UNESCO and Mr. Ogi, an inter-agency meeting on sport was convened in Geneva in July 2004 to discuss issues of coordination, cooperation and consistency in order to maximize the impact of celebrations and avoid duplication by the various programmes, projects and activities planned by the United Nations system for the International Year in 2005. The meeting resulted in a list of complementary activities and projects to be implemented on a voluntary basis by the various concerned entities of the United Nations system in accordance with their respective mandates. A further list of United Nations and other sport-based development projects is being constantly updated in a database financially supported by the Government of Switzerland.

IV. International activities and initiatives

13. United Nations entities can contribute to the International Year of Sport and Physical Education on one or more of three different levels: policy advice and advocacy; creation of projects and activities; and programme enhancement. This allows for a broad base of support that goes beyond short-term activities to foster a longer-term impact, a good example of which is the recently adopted National Youth Strategy for Albania, led by the Government and supported by the United Nations Country Team in Albania. In May 2004 the country team held a three-day workshop on sports as a means to promote development as part of the common programme with the Government of Albania for implementing the Strategy, with sports being viewed as a means to achieve social unity and to foster real-life values.

14. A number of projects and initiatives planned for the Year will focus on communications and advocacy, while several others will tap the potential of sport to enhance existing programmes, especially children- and youth-oriented programmes. To date, many entities of the United Nations system have integrated sport into both communications and programmatic aspects of their work.

15. The International Labour Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environmental Programme, UNESCO and the

United Nations Children's Fund have identified activities for the Year. Additionally, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS is planning to use major sports events as a means of raising awareness and fighting the stigma associated with the AIDS epidemic. They are the most recent body of the United Nations system to sign a memorandum of understanding with the International Olympic Committee (in June 2004).

16. A selection of international events planned to further awareness of the value of sport to promote education, health, development and peace include:

(a) The Fourth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education, and Sport, to be organized by UNESCO in Athens from 6 to 8 December 2004, which will be an initial opportunity to discuss, at the government level, the various development-related themes of sport in relation to the International Year in 2005;

(b) An international conference on sport and health, to be held in Tunis in January 2005;

(c) An international conference on sport and health, to be held in Moscow in 2004;

(d) An international summit on sport and the environment, to be held during the World Exposition in Aichi, Japan, in July 2005;

(e) The second international conference on sport and development, which will close the International Year in Magglingen, Switzerland, from 4 to 6 December 2005.

17. On the occasion of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships and the United Nations Children's Fund co-hosted a ministerial round table entitled "Common ground: sport as an innovative tool for development and peace", with 23 participants, including ambassadors, representatives of sports federations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations and former Olympic athletes.

18. A round table entitled "Harnessing the power of sport for development and peace" was organized by the international sports non-governmental organization Right to Play in Athens in August 2004 to highlight the humanitarian potential of sport and to demonstrate the breadth of its applicability through examples from a diverse group of countries. Two panel discussions provided specific understanding of sport as a potential tool for peace and sport as a contributor in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The round table brought together government representatives, United Nations leaders, the Olympic family, elite athletes, representatives of international sports federations and other members of the world of sport to ensure that sport becomes a recognized force in the global partnership for development.

V. Public information strategy

19. A public information strategy is being formulated for the International Year of Sport and Physical Education in 2005 through collaboration among the various public information units of participating entities of the United Nations system and the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat and in cooperation with various Governments and non-governmental organizations. An official logo for the

Year has already been approved by the Publications Board at Headquarters and is beginning to be disseminated to national committees as well as sports organizations such as the International Olympic Committee, which has agreed to make use of the logo. A slogan to complement the logo is also being worked on.

20. The use of sport and physical education as a means to promote education, health, development and peace must be viewed in relation to other United Nations initiatives and events. The year 2005 will also be the United Nations International Year of Microcredit and the office for the International Year of Sport and Physical Education intends to work closely with organizers of the International Year of Microcredit, as well as other international years and anniversaries, in order to develop synergies, where appropriate, to reduce costs and to maximize impact.

VI. Public awareness activities

21. The opportunity to participate in and enjoy sport and play is a human right to be promoted and supported. Sport and play are therefore not only a means, but also an end.

22. Many United Nations organizations work successfully with the world of sport in the area of communications and awareness-raising about key issues through global and local efforts. There are various ways to use sport as a vehicle to communicate a message, including working with athletes as ambassadors or spokespersons, dedication of sports events to development issues, involvement of the media and collaboration between all partners involved in sports events, including the private sector. These elements can be used individually or together as part of a coherent communications framework.

23. The convening power of sport makes it a useful tool to bring together communities for direct public initiatives and social mobilization. It allows for broad delivery of messages and programmes to a wide range of people at the local and national levels, drawing diverse groups together in a positive and supportive environment. Whether as an additional element to an existing sports event or as a sports festival specifically organized to further mobilization efforts, sport platforms provide a practical and cost-effective medium for sharing critical information with hard-to-reach groups.

24. In 2005, in the framework of the International Year, participating organizations of the United Nations system intend to continue their outreach activities together with sports organizations. Some events will be dedicated to the celebration of the International Year and, when possible, existing events, campaigns or communication strategies will adopt the imagery of the Year and further support the achievement of development- and peace-related goals.

VII. Related publications

25. Several important United Nations journals and other development-related publications that provide information on international cooperation and peace-building issues will be used for the promotion of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education in 2005.

26. The United Nations Environment Programme's youth magazine, *TUNZA*, is already regularly informing its readers about the value of sport as a way to understand the importance of preserving the environment. It has been proposed that an issue of the United Nations Development Programme magazine *Choices* be devoted to the International Year and national development agencies will be involved in an effort to further the theme of the Year in their own publications. Additionally, as part of the contribution of the International Labour Organization to the Year, a book on the socio-economic aspects of sport is expected to be published by mid-2005. A number of other publications will be targeted in both the North and the South and an opinion piece by Mr. Ogi will be submitted to one or more major international publications to highlight the importance of the Year.

VIII. Funding considerations

27. The number of Governments supporting sport-related development and peace initiatives is growing. However, the private sector, in particular sports industry manufacturers and sports organizations such as international sports federations, remain only marginally involved in funding development and peace initiatives. Fund-raising appeals are therefore planned to address all stakeholders, such as Governments, non-governmental organizations and private foundations.

28. A United Nations stamp has been designed for the International Year of Sport and Physical Education in 2005 in conjunction with the International Olympic Committee and the Swiss postal services. The proceeds from the sale of the stamp could be contributed to the fund for the Year. Other means of fund-raising are also being explored.

IX. Expected results

29. The International Year of Sport and Physical Education in 2005 is intended to provide an opportunity to promote the value of sport as a serious partner for the achievement of development and peace goals. It is expected that the perception of "sport" by the general public, as well as at the government level, will be broadened to include the notion of "sport for all". This is a particular issue for developing countries where the promotion of elite sport and the achievement of results at international sports competitions are considered a way of promoting national unity and a country's value and competitiveness. The International Year is expected to demonstrate that a fraction of the resources allocated to elite sport can have a significant impact on the general health conditions and well being of a large portion of a nation's population.

30. It is expected that the International Year will illustrate the importance of sport for a balanced education. Though an essential component of quality education and an integral part of lifelong learning, physical education is steadily losing ground in formal education systems. The neglect of physical education reduces the quality of learning, with negative future effects on public health and on health budgets. Given that rates of physical activity tend to decrease from adolescence on, it is imperative that young people gain an appreciation of sport at school in order to ensure lifelong active and healthy living.

31. It is expected that the sport-related private sector (the sports industry) and international sports federations will grow more interested in human development and peace-building issues. This can be achieved through the development of partnerships with the United Nations system and an increased sharing of information at all levels.

32. Initiatives will be encouraged to use sport as a means of promoting intercultural, post-conflict and peace-building dialogues. It is expected that such efforts will be evaluated and lessons will be learned and disseminated. To date, evidence of the validity of such initiatives remains anecdotal, since they are often considered non-essential and non-life-saving. The aim is to obtain solid evidence to make the case for sport-based initiatives promoting sustainable peace for their organization in a systematic and appropriate manner. Scientific research into sport-based initiatives should therefore be supported during the International Year and the results disseminated as widely as possible.

X. Implementation of other provisions of resolution 58/5

33. In its resolution 58/5, the General Assembly invited Governments to accelerate the elaboration of an international anti-doping convention in all sports activities, and requested UNESCO, in cooperation with other relevant international and regional organizations, to coordinate the elaboration of such a convention.

34. The matter was discussed at the UNESCO round table of ministers of physical education and sport, held in January 2003, which recommended that the preparation of the convention be coordinated by UNESCO, in close cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the Council of Europe, the International Olympic Committee, the World Anti-Doping Agency and the International Intergovernmental Consultative Group on Anti-Doping in Sport. A feature of the development of the convention is the critical involvement and cooperation of the World Anti-Doping Agency, the recognized lead non-government organization in the fight against doping.

35. The Director-General of UNESCO convened three ad hoc meetings of experts and two sessions of an intergovernmental meeting, resulting in a preliminary draft, which was sent out for comment to all Member States by the Director-General in mid-July 2004.

36. The Fourth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, to be held in Athens from 6 to 8 December 2004, will consider inputs to the preliminary draft and will obtain political agreement on any pending issues.

XI. Conclusion

37. Given the variety of contributions to the International Year of Sport and Physical Education in 2005, a common framework should be developed to unite the United Nations system and its partners to further sport for education, health, development and peace in a coordinated manner. The overarching objective should be the systematic integration of sport into existing activities, programmes and projects wherever relevant.

38. Further steps include continuing to work along the lines of the present report and to develop further the strong links among organizations of the United Nations system and the world of sport, Governments, the private sector and civil society. It is important that initiatives implemented for in connection with the International Year aim for longer-term effects that will be felt beyond 2005. Specific actions will include: (a) confirming the dates for the launch of the International Year; (b) preparing a concept document and communications strategy in support of national committees; and (c) developing a calendar of events connected with the International Year.

Notes

1 See resolution 55/2.

2 See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Twentieth Session, Paris, 24 October-28 November 1978*, vol. 1: *Resolutions*.

3 Ibid., *Report of the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000*, Paris, 2000.